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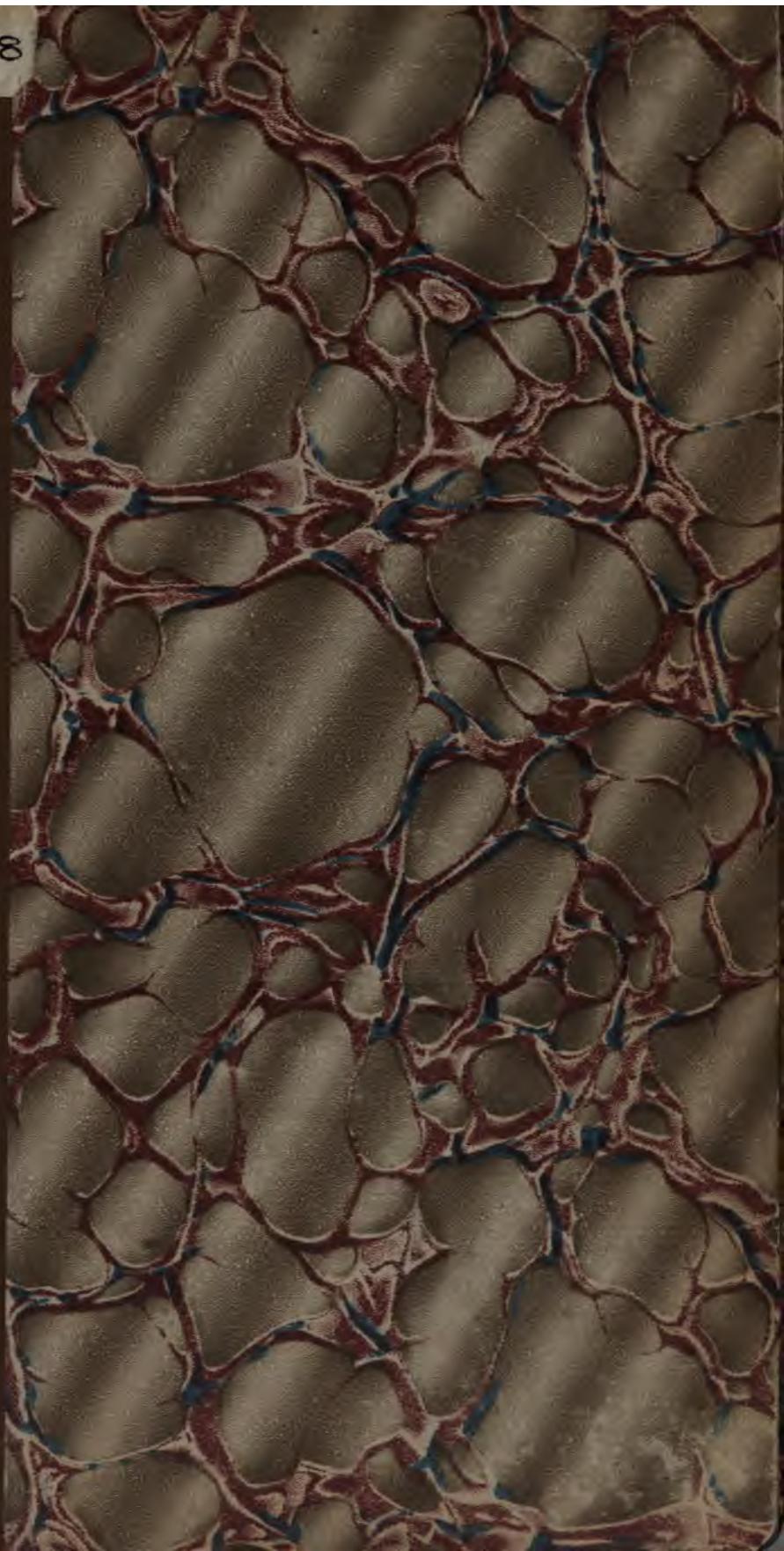
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S P E E C H

DELIVERED BY

HON. JOSIAH QUINCY, SENIOR,

BEFORE

THE WHIG STATE CONVENTION,

ASSEMBLED AT THE MUSIC HALL, BOSTON.

AUG. 16. 1854.

BOSTON:

PRINTED BY JOHN WILSON & SON,

22, SCHOOL STREET.

1854.



Rev. George E. Ellis
with respects of
Josiah Quincy

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Senibus autem labores corporis minuendi, exercitationes animi etiam augendae videntur; danda vero opera, ut et amicos, et juventutem, et maxime rempublicam consilio et prudentia quam plurimum adjuvent.

CICERO DE OFFICIS, 1. i. § 34.

S P E E C H.

I CAME, fellow-citizens, to this meeting as a private citizen of Massachusetts, by special invitation. I came not as a party man. At the age of eighty-three, I should feel myself self-dishonored, self-disgraced, if I offered my services and enlisted myself under the banner of any party. I came here with no intention to volunteer a word on any subject; but I did come here with a fixed determination, that, if I was called upon, I would respond, — that you should hear the opinions of an individual who has in this world now but little to hope for, and, thank God, nothing to fear; who has behind him the memory of the past, and before him an opening grave, in which he must soon be deposited. From such an individual, and under such circumstances, you have a right to expect the words of truth, of duty, and of soberness.

I come not here to utter any vituperative demonstration against the slaveholders of the South. They have used the powers vested in them by the Constitution as probably every selfish combination of men would have used them under the same circumstances, placed under the same temptations, and with the same powers. In every step of the progress of the slave-

power, they have had men of the free States as fellow workers. If the free States would regain their influence, they must cultivate a higher state of political morality among themselves. They must *disgrace* the doctrine, that "everything is fair and honorable in politics," and regard him who has notoriously sold himself for power and place, as a traitor to principle as well as to his country.

The "Nebraska Fraud," as it is called, is nothing more than the last act of a series of aggressions on the free States, which slaveholders have practised for more than fifty years; in no one of which could they have been successful, except through the corruption and the divisions of the free States. So far from complaining of this Nebraska fraud—why, I rejoice at it! It is said that it is the last straw which breaks the camel's back. I trust in Heaven that this is that last straw which will rouse the spirit of the free States; that this will prove the last straw which shall excite the Northern camel to rise in its spirit and its strength, and toss from its back one, at least, of the many burthens with which it has hitherto been oppressed.

I shall leave the Nebraska fraud to be discussed and reprobated by others. It is not that burthen which most presses upon my mind. There is another, nearer home, more immediate, more important, and more insupportable. What that burthen is, I shall speak distinctly and without any circumlocution.

The obligation incumbent upon the free States to deliver up fugitive slaves is that burthen; and it must be obliterated from the Constitution at every hazard. And such obliteration can be demonstrated

to be as much the interest of the South as it is of the North.

The circumstances in which the people of Massachusetts are placed, in consequence of that burthen, are undeniable; and they are also undeniably insupportable. What has been seen, what has been felt, by every man, woman, and child in this metropolis and in this vicinity, and virtually by every man, woman, and child in Massachusetts? We have seen our Court House in chains, two battalions of dragoons, eight companies of artillery, twelve companies of infantry, the whole constabulary force of the city police, the entire disposable marines of the United States, with artillery loaded for action, all marching in support of a Praetorian band, consisting of one hundred and twenty select friends and associates of the United States Marshal, with loaded pistols and drawn swords,— and all this military preparation and array,— for what purpose? To escort and conduct a poor, trembling slave from a Boston Court House to the fetters and lash of his master!

This display of military force the Mayor of this city officially declared to be necessary on the occasion. Nay, more, at a public festival he openly took to himself the glory of this display, declaring that by it life and liberty had been saved, and the honor of Boston vindicated!

I make no comments. I state facts as the ground out of which spring the duties of the people of Massachusetts.

I state another fact, still more conclusive and illustrative of those duties.

This scene (thus awful, thus detestable) every in-

habitant of this metropolis, nay, more, every inhabitant of this Commonwealth, may be compelled again to witness, at any and every day of the year, at the will or the whim of the meanest and basest slaveholder of the South. This also is undeniable.

Now, is there a man in Massachusetts, with a spirit so low, so debased, so corrupted by his fears or his fortune, that he is prepared to say that this is a condition of things to be endured, in perpetuity, by us; and that this is an inheritance to be transmitted by us to our children for all generations? For, so long as the fugitive-slave clause remains in the Constitution of the United States unobliterated, it is an obligation perpetual upon them as well as upon us.

And is this inheritance we are about to transmit to our children an inheritance of freedom? No, fellow-citizens: it is an inheritance, in one respect, worse than that of slavery.

There is not a Negro in the South that can be compelled, even by his master, to cut the throat or blow out the brains of his brother Negro. Yet, so long as the fugitive-slave obligation remains in the Constitution, there is not a militia-man in Massachusetts who may not be compelled to-morrow to cut the throat or blow out the brains of a fellow-citizen, at the will of the basest Southern slaveholder. My fellow-citizens, believe me, the time has come for the people of Massachusetts to look upon this slave-clause no longer in the ever-shifting, ever-dubious, ever-suspicious light of party spirit, but under the influence of an enlightened patriotism, watchful of the signs of the times, and anxious concerning their duties to themselves and their posterity.

But I hear some timid brother exclaim, "Why, this is, in effect, a dissolution of the Union. Did not the Southern slaveholders tell us, before the adoption of the Constitution, that without the fugitive-slave clause they would not come into the Union? and have they not told us every day since its adoption, that, whenever that clause is obliterated, they will go out of it?" And do you believe them any the more for this reiterated threat and eternal outcry? Does not the nature of things speak a louder language than that of these threateners? Are the slaveholders fools or madmen? They go out of this Union for the purpose of maintaining the subjection of their slaves! Why, the arm of the Union is the very sinew of that subjection! It is the slaveholder's main strength. Its continuance is his forlorn hope.

But I go further, fellow-citizens. I believe that in the nature of things,—by the law of God and the laws of man,—that clause is at this moment abrogated, so far as respects moral obligation. There is a principle of common law, which, if not strictly applicable, is sufficiently analogous to the obligations resulting from that clause. It is *cessante ratione cessat et ipsa lex*. When the fundamental relations of things, which were the basis of a political contract, have been changed by the art and artifice of one of the contracting parties, the moral obligations resulting from that contract, upon the other party, are also materially changed.

Now, what was the understanding and what was the state of things under which that contract was made?

The free States agreed, in 1789, to be field-drivers

and pound-keepers for the black cattle of the slaveholding States, within the limits and according to the fences of the old United States. Between that year and this, Anno Domini 1854, those slaveholders have broken down the old boundaries, and opened new fields of an unknown and indefinite extent. They have multiplied their black cattle by millions; and are every day increasing their numbers, and extending their cattle-field into the wilderness. Under these circumstances, are we bound to be their field-drivers and pound-keepers any longer? Answer me, people of Massachusetts. Are you the sons of the men of 1776? or do you "lack gall to make oppression bitter"?

I would willingly dwell upon this topic and others which are in my mind, but I have already occupied more than my proportion of this debate.

I have pointed out your burthen. I have shown you that it is insupportable.

I shall be asked, how shall we get rid of it?

I answer, it is not for a private individual to point the path which a State is to pursue to cast off an insupportable burthen: it belongs to the constituted authorities of that State. But this I will say, that if the people of Massachusetts adopt, in the spirit of their fathers, as one man, solemnly the resolve that they will no longer submit to this burthen, and will call upon the free States to concur in, and carry into effect, this resolution,—the burthen will be cast off, the fugitive-slave clause obliterated, not only without the dissolution, but with a newly acquired strength to the Union.







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